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STATE FOR WHA/CCA AND WHA/CAN

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TAGS: ETRD ETTC PREL CA CU

SUBJECT: CANADA'S RESPONSE TO THE LIBERTAD ACT

REF: SECSTATE 65523

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Answers below to reftel questions derive from information from the Deputy Director of the Central America and Caribbean Division, the Cuba Desk Officer, and the Trade Commissioner and Director of Latin America and Caribbean Commercial Relations at the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

¶2. (C) What is the nature of investments (and names, if known) that host country businesses have in Cuba?

Canada is one of the largest foreign investors in Cuba. Canadian natural resources company Sherritt International is one of the world's largest investors in Cuba. Sherritt engages in mining, oil and gas production, electricity generation, and soybean processing in Cuba. Canadian companies operate in a variety of sectors of the Cuban economy, including tourism, construction, agriculture, bio-technology, and mining. In November 2007, Canada had a pavilion at the 25th Havana Trade Fair. Canada participates in this fair, the largest in Cuba, on an annual basis. Canada imports from Cuba in 2006 were estimated at CAD 692 million. Primary imports are tobacco, books and newspapers, and seafood. Canadian exports to Cuba were estimated at CAD 513 million in 2006. Main exports are machinery, electronic equipment, motor vehicles, as well as copper, iron, and steel products.

¶3. (C) Are there any bilateral trade agreements between host country and Cuba?

With the exception of an aviation agreement, Canada has no bilateral trade agreements with Cuba.

¶4. (C) Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba, including but not limited to: scholarships for host country nationals to study in Cuba; Cuban-paid medical travel for host country nationals; and Cuban doctors working in host country?

Canada does not have a formal exchange program with Cuba, including in the medical field. However, many exchanges occur informally between organizations such as high school sports teams and cultural groups. Some Canadian and Cuban youths participate in academic exchange programs.

¶5. (C) Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba? This can include: public statements or other governmental actions, such as resolutions in the national assemblies condemning human rights abuses in Cuba; statements in support of democracy following the July 31, 2006 handover of power from Fidel to Raul Castro; or actions in support of

civil society in Cuba through host country's diplomatic missions or other fora.

Canada shares the same goals as the United States toward Cuba in respect to democracy and human rights. Canada, however, maintains a policy of "principled engagement" with both the Cuban government and dissident elements, which Canada believes allows it the opportunity to have a positive impact on human rights and democracy in Cuba. There are a number of examples over the past six months of Canada's engagement and intervention on behalf of human rights and the advancement of democratization in Cuba:

-- Prime Minister Harper made statements emphasizing the importance of human rights in Cuba during July 2007 visits to Chile and Barbados, which were part of a Latin American and Caribbean tour signaling Canada's re-engagement with the region. At a news conference in Barbados, PM Harper stated that Canada has "concerns about certain aspects of governance and human rights in Cuba" and is actively promoting values Qand human rights in Cuba" and is actively promoting values related to democratic and open societies throughout the region;

-- The Canadian Ambassador and officials from the Government of Cuba meet regularly to discuss the harsh treatment of dissidents. Conversations are reportedly polite but "firm and frank;"

--The Canadian Embassy sponsors Canadian Studies Centers in several locations in Cuba to inform the general populace about life in a democratic country with a market-based economy. A wide range of literature on human rights and democracy is available in these centers. The Canadian government also regularly sends speakers to these venues,

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such as a visit in February 2007 by Canadian Supreme Court Justice Michel Bastarache, during which he spoke about human rights and Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

-- The Canadian government-funded think tank FOCAL (Canadian Foundation for the Americas) maintains an active series of programs on Cuba which focus on support for dissidents and the post-Castro period. It has a comprehensive program for documenting all Cuban government actions against dissidents and supports an active dialogue on planning for the post-Castro era. FOCAL also supports civil society programs such as a recent conference entitled "Afro-Cubans and Economic Development: What Role for Strategic Policy and Civil Society?"

¶6. (C) Have there been any high level diplomatic visits between Cuba and host country in the past six months?

-- Canadian Deputy Foreign Minister Leonard Edwards visited Cuba from May 24 to 27, 2007. According to DFAIT's Central America and Caribbean Division Deputy Director, Edwards had a three-hour meeting with Cuban Foreign Minister Roque, with the "vast majority" of the three hours devoted to human rights, including specific political prisoners;

-- Cuban Minister of Government Ricardo Cabrisas visited Canada in July 2007. Cabrisas met with high level Canadian government officials, including Deputy Foreign Minister Edwards and Parliamentary Secretary Ted Menzies to discuss trade and investment, as well as human rights and other political issues;

-- Josefina Vidal, the director of the North America Division at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited Ottawa in November 2007. Vidal met with officials from DFAIT and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), as well as various political and economic institutions.

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